



Emergency Management – Chief Resilience Officer – Appointment and Duties

HB 542 – February 17, 2021 – Health and Government Operations Committee

David Nemazie, Chief of Staff

Thank you Chairwoman Pendergrass and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee to allow me to provide this testimony on behalf of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES).

Since its founding in 1925, UMCES has been engaged in science to management programs to meet its legislatively mandated mission to “...develop and apply a predictive ecology for Maryland and her citizens.” Our work spans numerous topics mostly related to the Chesapeake Bay, its watershed and species therein, from the mountains of Western Maryland to the Atlantic Ocean.

Effective management of our coastal resources requires improvements in understanding vulnerability and risk. UMCES scientists are developing holistic approaches to understanding how marshes, wetlands, living shorelines, aquatic grasses, and beach vegetation can help stabilize coasts. Additionally, we are developing partnerships to span and integrate natural sciences, engineering, urban planning, and social sciences needed for innovative solutions. UMCES will also build on its record of translating scientific discoveries and innovations into effective management actions.

This bill calls for the creation of a Chief Resilience Officer appointed by the Director of the Maryland Emergency Management Agency and is responsible for coordinating state and local efforts to build resilience to risks in the Hazard Mitigation Plan, particularly related to impacts related climate change.

The Chief Resiliency Officer will coordinate amongst the MCCC Adaptation and Resiliency Work Group, Maryland Department of Environment – particularly related to flood insurance maps, and the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science related to establishing a resiliency baseline and developing several economic, financial planning, investment projection reports.

Unfortunately, global emissions of greenhouse gasses are increasing as are global temperatures. In fact, this past decade is the warmest on record. These projections are going in the wrong direction. Maryland is one of the most impacted states from climate change along with Louisiana and Florida.

By 2080, the Baltimore region will experience weather currently in Mississippi where summer temperatures will be 6°F warmer in the summer and 9°F warmer in the winter. Sea levels are expected to rise 1.2’ – 4.2’ by 2100 but can be much higher (4’-7’ feet) if ice loss approaches the worst case scenarios. Finally, storms are flashier than have been experienced in the past.

An unstable climate regime will impose new burdens on the state's planning and response capability, including a need for greater flexibility, greater interagency coordination; and greater ability to rapidly

integrate new information and research findings. Therefore, the Chief Resilience Officer coordinating role and developing various reports and tools is important for the State of Maryland to begin planning for continued impacts due to climate change.

UMCES supports HB542 and seeks the Committee's favorable report.